

# THE NEXT STEP

HOW AMBITIOUS BUSINESSES CAN  
ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL



DEFINING POTENTIAL CLIENTS  
BY THEIR ETHOS AND VALUES

Interview with Gavin Harris, Co-Founder / Director  
Grandesco

COMMISSIONED BY



**SPECIALIST ACCOUNTING SOLUTIONS**

ADVISORY AND FINANCIAL OUTSOURCING FOR SMEs AND GROWTH BUSINESSES

A report commissioned by SAS Specialist Accounting Solutions considers the biggest challenge for any independently-owned company which has the potential to go further.

The ability of the owners to scale the business.

In their own words, directors talk about the issues they are having to address and how they want to achieve their goals.

The interviews will be brought together as a report to be published by DECISION magazine and then as a digital book.



**SPECIALIST ACCOUNTING SOLUTIONS**

ADVISORY AND FINANCIAL OUTSOURCING FOR SMEs AND GROWTH BUSINESSES

Something didn't happen when Gavin Harris and Sue Reynolds set up Grandesco, their web design and digital marketing agency. They'd be the first to say that it wasn't intentional, but its absence has provided them with a platform to build the business.

"Rather than define ourselves by focusing on a particular sector, we identify the type of clients we want to work for by their ethos and values," explains Harris. "The main criterion is that they have a passion for their business. The question we ask ourselves is would we buy from them? We wouldn't want to deliver new customers to them otherwise.

"Often what happens with a new business is that an opportunity presents itself, and it gets more and more work from that sector. You could say it then has a niche, but equally you could argue that it has become restricted."

It's hard to differentiate between the thousands of web and digital marketing service providers, many cooped up in their back bedrooms well before Covid-19 lockdowns made their working from home a necessity. But Harris and Reynolds can flag up a characteristic of Grandesco which has become increasingly rare.

"Our background is in traditional media (radio and newspapers)," says Harris. "When we look at a lot of other web design and marketing agencies, we can see they understand the technology, but we're marketers, and technology just happens to be the tool we now use.

"If you come into this from the position of understanding the technology above anything else, it means that the focus is on process rather than creativity. Before, when we worked together in radio, we would find companies to match our audience. In agency, we create the audience."



**SPECIALIST ACCOUNTING SOLUTIONS**

ADVISORY AND FINANCIAL OUTSOURCING FOR SMEs AND GROWTH BUSINESSES



*Gavin Harris*

“The key thing is we have different skills which complement each other, and we need each other’s skill-sets to get to where we want to be. It meant we started the business together with synergy.

“One of the great things about this country is that it is easy to set up a company, so when you see an opportunity you can seize it and give it a go. It’s not about taking a punt - we invested a lot of time, which of course has a cost.

“Our vision hasn’t changed over time, but it’s a question of how a company is able to move forward with its ethos intact. How that is achieved is what can change, taking into account for example, the founders being able to step back from those day-to-day administrative tasks. I think the biggest jump is when someone else does the hiring of new staff.

*Sue Reynolds*



Harris says the turning point for Grandesco was putting proper systems in place. “It seems very few businesses of our size actually have them,” he muses. “Without them, bringing someone new on board and getting them up to speed with how you work can take months. With systems in place, anyone with the right skill-set can follow them, and it provides consistency.

“Otherwise a company’s ethos is based on the unwritten behaviours of its ‘A’ players, and if they leave, then what? I’m a believer in the need to document process, explaining how we should go about making decisions for example. Otherwise you don’t have the platform to scale. I’ve met owners who will shrug their shoulders and say that to grow their business they need to clone themselves. I think it would be easier to introduce processes which are appropriate to the size of the company! The most difficult part is that we’re a creative business and we don’t



want to restrict innovative thinking or have the culture where people don't look to explore other options. But having appropriate processes in place ensures that the output we are delivering is more predictable in terms of what it is going to achieve for the customer.

“The key to keeping on track, and for us this is really important, is that goals are set for five years, one year, six months, and one month - so we know that what we are doing today is moving us in the right direction. ‘Cashflow’ is the most important document because you cannot make any decision if you don't have that to hand.

“All of this is necessary if you are going to move on from the storming and forming stage of a business, the time when you are finding out who you like working with, and who you can produce the best results for. But you can't grow if you just stay in that zone.”

The pandemic didn't materially affect Grandesco's modus operandi. “When we set up the business we wanted to make sure we could work from anywhere, so we could take our holidays and still keep involved,” explains Harris. “I've never understood why you had to be in an office five days a week or travel to meet a client simply for a catch up communication. What has happened though over the last year is that the pandemic has meant the pendulum has swung completely in the direction of remote working and we need to return to there being a balance. We changed our employment contracts so that we have core working hours, but the beginning and end of the working day are flexible.

“What remote working means is that we can recruit by skill-set rather than geography, which deepens the talent pool. We have a member of staff who has a serviced office building closer to their home than our office, so we hire a desk for them there when they need it. Video calls



**SPECIALIST ACCOUNTING SOLUTIONS**

ADVISORY AND FINANCIAL OUTSOURCING FOR SMEs AND GROWTH BUSINESSES

to people working remotely don't just have to take place at scheduled times - you can make them in an unstructured way just for a chat, which is more like how life would be in an office. But you need the discipline to make that call and that employees are happy to make contact as well, rather than them thinking they are disturbing you. It's about having that digital equivalent of an open door policy.

“Technology can make flexibility effortless. With VoIP, I can take this phone and travel anywhere in the world, and if someone calls my number I'll answer it regardless of what country I'm in; as far as they are concerned, it's as if I am in the office.”

And that kind of flexibility isn't a fleeting trend. “In reality,” says Harris, “growth is not going to be along a linear line; you learn from the challenges and they make you more resilient.”

“What founders have to acknowledge,” he maintains, “is that they shouldn't continue trying to do everything by themselves just because they did when they started the business. As soon as a task becomes repetitive, they should get someone else to do it, and make that change straightaway. Otherwise their business cannot continue to deliver effective growth.”

[www.grandesco.uk](http://www.grandesco.uk)



**SPECIALIST ACCOUNTING SOLUTIONS**

ADVISORY AND FINANCIAL OUTSOURCING FOR SMEs AND GROWTH BUSINESSES

## About Specialist Accounting Solutions

‘We strive to give our clients the most reliable, accurate and insightful financial information’, says founder Sean Hackemann. ‘Our passion is to help businesses fully understand the numbers which in turn helps them create, grow and sustain great businesses’.

Specialising in advisory, virtual FD and financial outsourcing services, Specialist Accounting Solutions Ltd works with ambitious entrepreneurs and management teams, supporting them to achieve their goals.

### Financial Outsourcing Services:

- Virtual FD/ part-time FD/ head of finance
- Fully and partially outsourced solutions
- Monthly management accounts with detailed financial analysis
- Bookkeeping
- Dealing with financial compliance

### Advisory Services:

- Financial modelling
- Business valuations
- Raising capital
- Acquisitions and disposals
- Finance reviews and reports

Specialist Accounting Solutions Ltd

T: 0118 911 3777

E: [info@teamsas.co.uk](mailto:info@teamsas.co.uk)

W: [www.teamsas.co.uk](http://www.teamsas.co.uk)

A: The Blade, Abbey Square, Reading, RG1 3BE

Report researched and published for Specialist Accounting Solutions Ltd  
by **DECISION magazine**  
[www.decisionmagazine.co.uk](http://www.decisionmagazine.co.uk)



**SPECIALIST ACCOUNTING SOLUTIONS**  
ADVISORY AND FINANCIAL OUTSOURCING FOR SMEs AND GROWTH BUSINESSES